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Reduction of Gustav I of Sweden

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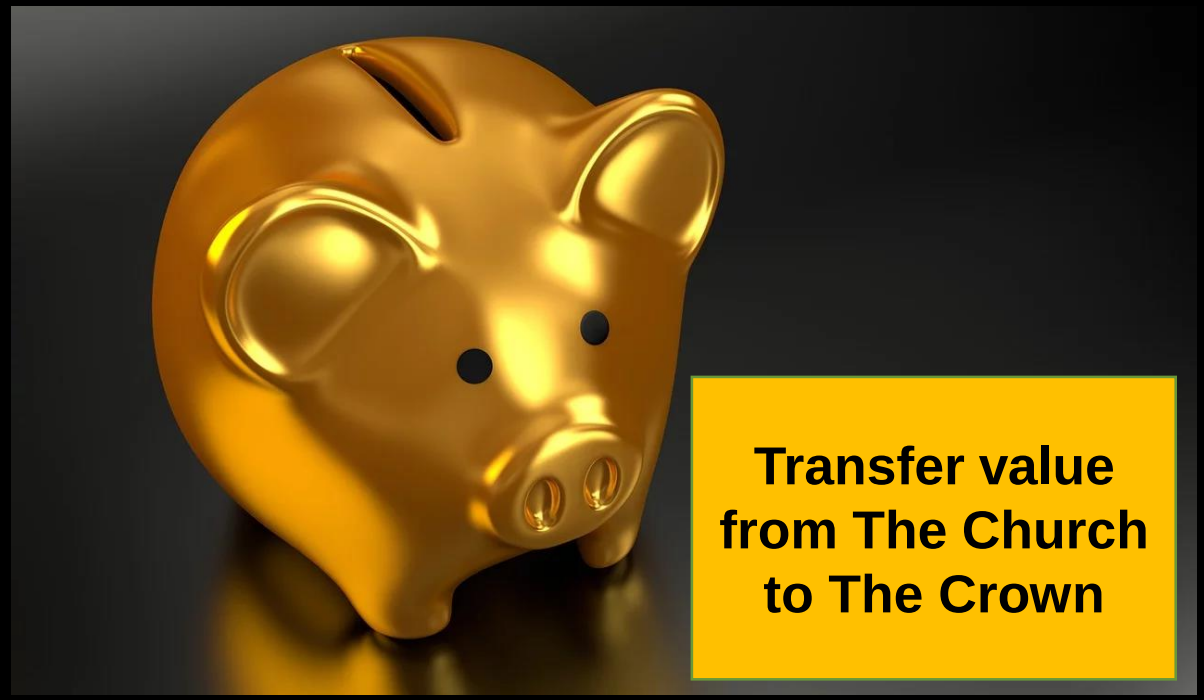

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The reduction

The goal of the reduction was for all church property was to be transferred to the crown, and the independent income of the clergy to be replaced by an allowance or salary paid by the crown.
However, the king also wished to strengthen the position of the Swedish nobility, and therefore also allowed for all private donations of lands and estates to churches, bishops and convents since the reign of Charles VIII of Sweden to be retracted by the benefactors, or the families and descendants of the benefactors.

Property of Bishops
In the Reduction, all goods, lands and assets, particularly the formerly clerical castles, estates and strongholds belonging to Bishops and cathedrals, were to be regarded as Crown property, and the Bishops were from henceforth be provided for by the crown rather than from their own goods, in effect making the church economically dependent on the monarch. This transition was introduced in stages, often during the vacancies between the death of a bishop and the appointment of his successor.

Property of Convents

Property of monastic institutions in Sweden were subjected to the same rules, and their lands and property declared property of the crown. Each convent was placed under the supervision of a nobleman who was to manage the former convent property for the crown. While the monks and nuns where allowed to remain in their conventual buildings, under government protection and with a state allowance, the monastic communities effectively lost their economic independence, and started to die out. The reform was therefore in effect the dissolution of the Swedish convents.

The rule that allowed for the families of former benefactors to retract land and property donated to the church was particularly damaging to the convents.

Property of local churches and shrines

From 1539, the final stage was introduced, in which the property of local vicars was also declared crown property, and valuables were confiscated from local churches and shrines - a visible sign of the reformation which caused opposition among the peasantry and contributed to the Dalecarlian rebellions and the Dacke War.

The Dacke War (Swedish: Dackefejden) was a peasant uprising led by Nils Dacke in Småland, Sweden, in 1542 against the rule of Gustav Vasa. Dacke and his followers were dissatisfied with the heavy tax burden, the introduction of Lutheranism, and the confiscation of Church property (the confiscation and taxes were introduced to pay for the Swedish War of Liberation that had brought Gustav Vasa to power). In 1543 the uprising was defeated, and Nils Dacke was killed.

The army of Gustav Vasa on its way to defeat Nils Dacke.

Nils Dacke and his peasants were dissatisfied with the policies of the Swedish king Gustav Vasa. In his effort to modernize Sweden and gain more power, the king had instituted a more efficient system for tax collection. The heavy tax burden angered many peasants.

Aftermath

The king's revenge on the instigators of the rebellion was hard. The leaders that were caught were executed together with the priests who had supported Dacke. Peasants who had supported the rebellion were deported to Finland, where they had to serve in the army, and the counties where the rebellion had taken place had to pay a large fine to the king.
Dacke himself was caught and killed in August 1543 when trying to escape the country. According to legend, his body was taken to Kalmar, where his head was publicly displayed wearing a crown of copper, as a warning to others.

Unrest in Ydre continued well after the death of Dacke and ended only after Gustav Vasa sent a force of 400 men to pacify the hundred.
The rebellion was the most serious threat to the rule of Gustav Vasa, but after having defeated it he managed to consolidate his power, concentrating more and more power in the hands of the monarch.